

# Harmonizing New Construction with Historic Charm

## *The Bristol Santa House at the Bristol Statehouse*

The Bristol Santa House is currently situated on the grounds of the Bristol Statehouse (constructed in 1819). The Santa House is not a permanent structure, and while it is new construction, it is built in a style meant to convey historic charm (reminiscent of an 1890s train depot, compatible with the construction date of the Statehouse). The structure does not detract from the character of the adjacent/host property (the Bristol Statehouse) or the Town Common. Even though the Santa House is not new construction, we will address the points below pertaining to new construction situated near historic buildings and historic sites.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/new-construction-in-historic-properties.htm>

According to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#) – Standard 9 in particular – and the [Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings](#), new construction needs to be built in a manner that protects the integrity of the historic building(s) and the property's setting. (Respect the overall character of the site.)

Related new construction – including buildings, driveways, parking lots, landscape improvements, and other new features – must not alter the historic character of a property. A property's historic function must be evident even if there is a change of use.

*The historic character of the site is as a Town Common – a site for recreation, public, social, and civic activities open to all. The Bristol Santa House is free and open to the public, serving as a site for recreational, social, and charitable activities.*

The location of new construction should be considered carefully in order to follow the setbacks of historic buildings and to avoid blocking their primary elevations. New construction should be placed away from or at the side or rear of historic buildings and must avoid obscuring, damaging, or destroying character-defining features of these buildings or the site.

*The Bristol Santa House is currently situated at the side of the historic Bristol Statehouse and does not block or obscure any historic building.*

Protecting the historic setting and context of a property, including the degree of open space and building density, must always be considered when planning new construction on a historic site. This entails identifying the formal or informal arrangements of buildings on the site and whether they have a distinctive urban, suburban, or rural character. For example, a historic building traditionally surrounded by open space must not be crowded with dense development.

In properties with multiple historic buildings, the historic relationship between buildings must also be protected. Contributing buildings must not be isolated from one another by the insertion of new construction.

*The Santa House does not disrupt the historic relationship between the Statehouse and the two school buildings located on the same elevation.*

As with new additions, the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of new construction on the site of a historic building must be compatible with those of the historic building. When visible, and in close proximity to historic buildings, the new construction must be subordinate to these buildings. New construction should also be distinct from the old and must not attempt to replicate historic buildings elsewhere on site and to avoid creating a false sense of historic development.

*The Bristol Santa House is subordinate to its host organization's structure – the Bristol Statehouse. Features of the Bristol Santa House that complement the historic Bristol Statehouse include the following:*

- *The body color of the Santa House closely approximates that of the Statehouse. (The body color of the Statehouse was selected by historic paint analysis.)*
- *The Statehouse features 3 colors: a tan body and brown trim, with white window trim and muntins. The Bristol Santa House features 3 colors: a tan body and red trim, with white window muntins.*
- *Both structures have cupolas and metal weathervanes.*
- *The simple balustrades of the Santa House porch mimic the balustrades of the central tower, cupola, and 2nd-floor window "porch" of the Statehouse.*
- *The arched doorways of the Santa House (side and front) mimic the central 2nd-floor main elevation arched window of the Statehouse.*
- *There is a gable on the center front elevation of each structure.*
- *Both structures have shutters and simple columns/posts on the front elevations.*

*The examples below show how the Bristol Santa House is reminiscent of an 1890s train depot, compatible with the construction date of the Bristol Statehouse.*



San Juan-By-The-Sea, CA Train Depot - 1890

Source: [www.Etsy.com](http://www.Etsy.com)

[https://i.etsystatic.com/14602514/r/il/d7d95c/1548562263/il\\_1140xN.1548562263\\_gox5.jpg](https://i.etsystatic.com/14602514/r/il/d7d95c/1548562263/il_1140xN.1548562263_gox5.jpg)



Menlo Park, CA Railroad Station – 1890

Source: [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Menlo\\_Park\\_Railroad\\_Station,\\_1890.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Menlo_Park_Railroad_Station,_1890.png)



Lowry, VA Train Depot - 1890

Source: [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)

<https://i.ebayimg.com/images/g/R6EAAOSwVFIUBjb2/s-l300.jpg>



Woonsocket, RI Train Depot - 1882

Source: Valley Breeze

<https://bloximages.newyork1.vip.townnews.com/valleybreeze.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/2/58/25887669-d933-5cf8-bb90-f654d5666b2a/612f84b839e69.image.jpg?resize=400%2C253>